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Radio-rock film hides truth with gloss

THE GRAPEVINE
By Maurice Chemer

Browsing in Eaton's at the wine kiosks

And then there's a wine gala.

Like the one planned for tonight at Montreal's downtown Eaton's department store starting at 7:30.

It will include the tasting of eight wines — one of them a red Bordeaux considered one of the best deals now available at a Maison des Vins specialty store.

The gala will also include a six-course meal plus dancing to the orchestra of Noel Talarico, all for $27.50 a person.

This wine fest follows the store's fifth annual spring wine bash held Tuesday and Wednesday nights this week. It was attended by hundreds of Montrealers and friends who sampled some of the 27 wines available and enjoyed an excellent cold buffet at $17.50 a head in the store's large ninth floor dining room.

But don't worry if you've missed the wine festival and can't make it to tonight's gala. I'll tell you what you missed at the fest and the gala organizers were kind enough to give The Grapevine the names of the eight wines to be served tonight.

Which will give me a chance to talk about one of those wines — the one which I think is a good deal as a special occasion wine — and which, for $10.80 a bottle, will bring a bit of the gala to your own table.

But first about the wine festival.

If, like the gala, was organized by the International Wine and Food Society. Eaton's and the Quebec Liquor Corporation with Marcel Harvey and his Maison des Vins staff selecting the wines.

These were served at six kiosks and the guests were invited to amble from kiosk to kiosk and sample many wines as they wanted.

Sour-sweet taste

The first kiosk had white wines. There was a Colomb Marechal, a white Burgundy, an Entre Deux Mers "La Gamage" from Bordeaux and a German Wengartener Trappenberg. I enjoyed a mouthful of Wengartener which I found an excellent qualisee, with a sour-sweet taste typical of these late-harvest white wines.

More white wines at the second kiosk. The choice for me was between a Graves of Bordeaux, a Greek Demestica, a Burgundy Prince Philippe 1974, a French commoner by the name of Les Amanderes and a German Burgiarer Schlosskapitel.

I was tempted by the German and the Burgundy, both in the $5 range, but I chose a mouthful of Demestica, a very dry white wine, probably great with seafood, and selling for only $2.90.

Third kiosk and I feel like singing. Six wines, all red but one. There's a young red Graves, 1975, a Gamay de Touraine, 1976, an Italian Inferno, a Chianti, a French rose petillant and a Spanish Don Quichotte. I find a mouthful of Inferno ($2.65 a bottle more robust than the chianti). The strong after-taste reminds me of that of the very robust sun-drenched North African wines.

At the fourth kiosk I pass the two-name Bordeaux, a very young Saint-Estephe and a similar Saint-Julien, to taste a Spanish Reserva Cocas Marvendro. Excellent for $3, but light. I also try an Italian Cabernet Grave Del Friuli. It might age a few more years. Worth the $3.20.

I find my favorite wine at the festival at kiosk five. It's a 1971 Italian Amarone red which could age at least another half dozen years. It sells for $6.35 at the Maison des Vins. The others at the kiosk were a Chateau Le Gardera, 1973, from Bordeaux; a Coteau de Touraine, another light Gamay de Touraine and a Casal Mendes Rose From Portugal.

The 1975 Chateau de Malleret Bordeaux at kiosk six can be kept for at least another 10 years. It's an Appelation Controlee Medoc and is worth the $4.85 price tag, if you have somewhere to keep it.

The six kiosks took me about 90 minutes of drinking, comparing notes with old and new friends and munching on small pieces of bread to clear the palate between wines. The buffet was excellent and more wines were served as we ate and talked wine.

Tonight's wine gala will have slightly more expensive wines — all sold only at the Maison des Vins in Montreal, Quebec and Hull.

Here's that wine list.

1. 1976 Chateau les Tuileries, 1973, $4.25
2. 1975 D Chateau Lagarde, 1973, $4.15
3. 1973 Chateau Laujac, 1971, $7.35
4. 1970 Chateau des Tours, 1976, $6.05
5. 1971 Chateau de Loudenne, 1973, $5.85
6. 1974 Beaune Mayeromet, 1975, $9.05
7. 1976 Domaine de Beau Site, $4.45
8. 1958 Chateau Branaire, 1971, $10.80

The first two wines are white Bordeaux wines, the third is a Bordeaux from the Medoc district, the fourth a Brouilly, one of my favorite Beaujolais communes, the fifth a Medoc (Cru Bourgeois), the sixth a Beaune from Burgundy, the seventh a good dry white Muscadet from the Loire and the last a fourth growth St. Julien from Bordeaux.

Let's look at that last wine a little closer

A special occasion wine

First the vintage year. In 1972, Bordeaux produced an extremely large amount of wine. The quality was thus lower but the Medocs fared better than the other Bordeaux districts, the Graves, the St. Emilions and the Pomerols.

The Medoc district north of the town of Bordeaux in southwestern France has four communes and they are all famous. They are Pauillac Margaux, Saint-Estephe and St. Julien.

And the best wines in St. Julien, which produces some of France's best wines, include five second growth wines, two third growths and four fourth growths. (St. Julien, according to the 1855 classification which rated Bordeaux wines, has no first, the best growth, or fifth growths.)

So that makes the Branaire the tenth best St. Julien on the market, according to the 1855 ratings. And the 1973 vintage, with its lower than average taxes level, is ready to drink now. Not a bad deal for $10.80.

Which is why I recommend the Chateau Branaire — to those with a special occasion in mind.

995B Chateau Branaire, 1973, $10.80.

• *Readers are invited to continue using The Grapevine to exchange views about wines. Write to: Maurice Chemer, Box 6036, Station A, Montreal, Que. E3C 3E2.*

Singer Jimmy Buffet: Concert doesn't help the movie

FM
Decarie Square and Place du Canada

A Universal film, produced by Hand Holstein, directed by John A. Alonzo, written by Ezra Sacks, starring Michael Brandon, Eileen Brennan, Alex Karras and Martin Mull, with special appearances by Linda Ronstadt, Tommy Shaw and Jimmy Buffet (the song composed and performed by Steely Dan.

BY JUAN RODRIGUEZ
of The Gazette

If the film "FM" has any message, it is that when the recording and movie industries team up, there's a killing to be made.

Rock films are the latest in the lines of exploitation, and this hokey and stupid movie aims straight for an audience that the makers of this film know they can deceive.

This is supposedly a behind-the-scenes look at the inner-workings of an FM rock radio station in Los Angeles. But all it is really is a childish Hardy Boys gloss on an industry whose exploitative power is fairly begging for a ripping insider's expose.

The film has a simplistic, totally unbelievable plot and a formula use of a near unrelenting soundtrack by some of today's top recording stars (Eagles, Fleetwood Mac, Boz Scaggs, Bob Seger, Queen, Foreigner, et al., as well as concert appearances by Linda Ronstadt and Jimmy Buffett.

The consortium of film and recording studio people who concocted such fodder haven't changed one iota from the Hollywood gang that filmed "The Girl Can't Help It" with Jayne Mansfield and a cast of late 1950s recording stars.

The only big difference is the size of the industry. The disc-film combination of Saturday Night Fever" produced unprecedented profits. "FM" aims to cash in on the trend but the silly story cannot compare with the more compelling social aspects of "Fever."

There's a whole schmozzle of loveably human characters that prance through the plot. Michael Brandon plays the part of the committed free form program director that youths FM station Q-SKY to the top of the Los Angeles market, surrounded by a flakey set of disc jockeys.

There's Eileen Brennan as the tired cynical sexy voice. Cleavon Little as the jive black jockey. Alex Karras as the washed-out member of the AM radio generation (at one point when he is offered a job back on AM, he looks as if he's about to shoot himself). There's also Cassie Yates as Brandon's lover-colleague.

They all give painfully earnest performances that go hand in hand with the unreality of the film — there are no scenes of payola, hard drug-taking, or pill-popping, which is more like the real thing.

Anything touchy is handled in comedy here, such as the Army salesman who visits the station to sell Brandon some "mod-style" ad pitches to join the army and lights up a joint of marijuana while delivering his rap. Brandon refuses to air the commercials, he gets pushed out by the bosses, the disc jockeys revolt with an on-the-air strike-barricade — totally ludicrous — and, well, everyone lives happily ever after.

The only redeeming feature is Martin Mull's performance as the vain and insecure Eric Swann, who broadcasts Rod McKuenisms while fooling around with a steady stream of convenient sex objects — when he runs out of women, he starts to cry.

Mull, who appears on the television show "Fernwood 2-Nite" as a sleazy talk-show host, is a remarkable satirist. He is the epitome of slime, his comedy is so good that his character is rendered utterly pathetic, in much the same way as Ted Knight was on the Mary Tyler Moore TV show.

Apart from Mull, "FM" is merely dreary exploitation, unreal and conceived with such a formula that unique pop artistes like Ronstadt and Buffett come off as little more than puppets.

MONTREAL FILMGOER'S GUIDE

DOWNTOWN

EAST

WEST

Producer wants profit

LOS ANGELES (Reuter) — The producer of the popular film, The Deep, has joined the ranks of Hollywood actors and filmmakers who contend they have been deprived of profits by studio accounting methods.

Producer Peter Guber complained as a film symposium that he has not seen a penny profit from the film even though it brought in more than $100 million at the box office.

Guber told a symposium organized by the Los Angeles film festival, Filmex, that he had been deprived of profits because of the studio's habit of charging excessive costs against a movie before declaring it profitable.

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